



Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA SINCE 1903

Inside Today School board members express concern over borough's test scores. » INTERIOR, A4

GOOD MORNING



The weather.

Cloudy with a chance of snow and highs from ranging from 5 to 15 above.

High today 13
Low tonight 0

WEATHER » A7

Aurora forecast.

Auroral activity will be moderate. Weather permitting, moderate auroral displays will be visible overhead.

This information is provided by aurora forecasters at the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. For more information about the aurora, visit <http://www.gi.alaska.edu/AuroraForecast>

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ART IN NATURE

Deb Horner captures White Mountains in watercolors.

OUTDOORS
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GREAT START

Nanooks mens basketball wins GNAC opener.

SPORTS
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...

SOURDOUGH JACK:

"They should ask me to be in the next commercial. I'm as Alaskan as it gets!"



FNG rates will decrease

By Matt Buxton
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Rates will go down for Fairbanks Natural Gas customers now that the utility is in state ownership, but they could go down further if oil prices were not so low.

Residential customers will see rates drop by 13.5 percent, about a \$450 annual savings for the 464 residences that get gas, said Fairbanks Natural Gas CEO Dan Britton on Thursday at the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority Board meeting in Anchorage.

AIDEA purchased Fairbanks Natural Gas and its parent company, which also owns a liquefaction facility in Port MacKenzie, earlier this year as part of a \$52.5 million deal. In all, it has about 1,000 cus-

RATE DROPS

Residential customers: 13.5 percent reduction for a \$450 annual savings

Small commercial customers: about 12 percent reduction

Large customers: 11.3 percent reduction

Changes go into effect Jan. 1

tomers.

Small commercial customers like small businesses and warehouses will see a reduction of about 12 percent. Large customers like the big box retailers will see a reduction of 11.3 percent.

Britton said the proposed rate changes go into effect Jan. 1 and are expected to be made permanent next year. The changes are focused on driving down residen-

tial rates, he said.

"There was maintaining the current rate structure that FNG has," Britton said. "Where commercial customers pay a little bit less because they use more, while trying to reduce rates to residential customers as much as we could."

In total, Fairbanks customers will save about \$2 million next year thanks to the rate changes, he said.

The state's main intention in purchasing the utility was to simplify and unite the natural gas distribution efforts in the area. The municipal Interior Gas Utility was developed to serve the medium or lower density areas of the borough out of concern that the privately held Fairbanks Natural Gas would not serve the utility.

That unification is being worked out still and is not expected to occur until next summer, but in the meantime customers will see the savings because of the lower profit margins required by a public owner.

The 2016 budget also anticipates a \$1.2 million drop in general and administrative costs for the utility.

RATES » A3

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE



Christi Rowinski, left, helps Dawn Cogan, right, light her candle during a vigil honoring people killed or injured in drunken driving accidents at the Morris Thompson Center on Thursday. Thursday was a national Day of Remembrance for people who were victims of drunken driving or underage drinking. The event was held locally by Mothers Against Drunk Driving Fairbanks. MADD Fairbanks hosts victim's panels the first Wednesday of every month where survivors, emergency personnel, and friends and family of those killed and others affected by drunken driving can speak to first-time drunken driving offenders.

ERIN CORNELIUSSEN/NEWS-MINER



Photographs of Heather Dowdy, left, who was killed by a drunken driver in 2000 when she was 17 years old, and Tom Rowinski, right, sit under a Christmas tree adorned with hearts for people killed or injured in drunken driving accidents.

ERIN CORNELIUSSEN/
NEWS-MINER

Fairbanks woman found with counterfeit money

By Dorothy Chomicz
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A woman who was charged in connection with the alleged use of counterfeit money at an adult entertainment store was found with drugs and \$900 of bogus bills inside her body when booked into jail early Saturday morning.

Chelsea Marie Sperry, 31, of Fairbanks, was arrested after she and a male companion allegedly used a phony \$100 bill to pay for merchandise at Castle Megastore on Old Steese Highway. Store personnel alerted police, and Sperry fled in a green sedan after the man handed her a wad of cash, according to a criminal complaint filed in Fairbanks District Court.

Sperry was stopped near the College Road Safeway gas station and was taken to Fairbanks Correctional Center on charges of driving with a suspended license and violating conditions of release.

During the booking process a corrections officer noticed Sperry making "furtive movements" toward her crotch, according to the complaint. Sperry was put through a body scanner, which revealed the presence of foreign objects in her body.

A female officer searched Sperry and found six \$100 bills, three \$50 bills, seven \$20 bills and one \$10 bill — all counterfeit — hidden inside one of her body cavities. A genuine \$10 bill was found inside a different cavity, according to the complaint.

The officer also found about eight grams of methamphetamine, six morphine sulfate pills, a little less than a quarter-gram of heroin and 40 small baggies inside Sperry, the complaint says.

The counterfeit bills were missing all normal security features, including watermarks and security threads, and one of the \$100 bills had the same serial number as the one used at Castle Megastore, according to the complaint.

Sperry was charged with felony first-degree forgery, felony third-degree drug misconduct and misdemeanor fourth-degree drug misconduct. The forgery charge was dropped by the district attorney's office on Monday.

The phony bills are clearly marked "for motion picture use only" and have been used at three other local stores in the past two weeks, according to city spokeswoman Amber Courtney.

Sperry's male companion spoke to police at Castle Megastore and identified himself as her boyfriend. He consented to a search, and police found a digital scale and several hundred dollars in his pocket, according to the

COUNTERFEIT » A5

Commercial pokes fun at Alaska Man stereotype to promote bus ridership

By Amanda Bohman
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It's when an eagle starts flying alongside a Fairbanks bus about 20 seconds into a new borough transit system TV commercial that viewers might think they are watching a fake "Saturday Night Live" commercial parodying Alaskans, if not sooner.

"You are Alaskan, and we know because your beard is amazing," the narrator says. "You don't need wheels because you ride the bus and it means freedom."



This screenshot, pulled from a new ad produced by Mammoth Marketing, shows the "Alaska Man" used to promote MACS bus ridership in Fairbanks. MAMMOTH MARKETING VIA NEWS-MINER

COMMERCIAL » A3

